

OPENING STATEMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

24th Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

14-18 November 2005, London

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be participating on behalf of the Russian Federation in the 24th Annual Meeting of NEAFC.

Our agenda for the week includes very important and challenging issues for us to discuss and decide upon.

Present global commitments and agreements call for new approaches by the regional fisheries management organizations to addressing today's challenges, if they wish to maintain their leading role in conservation and management of living resources in the ocean.

Our continued and future success depends on our ability to critically evaluate and improve the work of this Commission. There is now a movement developing in many regional fisheries management organizations to review their performance and adjust to become more effective and responsive to new environments. This, in the first place, implies filling gaps in their mandates to include ecosystem and biodiversity considerations, the precautionary approach.

Steps taken by NEAFC in this respect, which launched this work at the last Annual Meeting and tasked the Working Group on the Future of NEAFC to examine how the role of NEAFC can be strengthened in a broader context of the overall ocean governance can only be commended. This week we will have the opportunity to see its recommendations and take decisions on our next steps.

In the modern world the fisheries sector can not avoid taking into account environmental concerns, however, the decisions to protect marine environment, biodiversity and critical habitats, must be made on the best possible scientific basis.

We are confident that a closer cooperation between science and managers will ensure well-informed, from the point of view of science and economic considerations, decision-making and objective development of ecosystem approach strategies, and we welcome and support the idea of setting up the Permanent Management and Science Committee in NEAFC.

Regional fisheries management cooperation has always played a significant role in the governance of fisheries in the North Atlantic. We believe, that regional approaches should further be strengthened to ensure effective long-term conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources in this part of the ocean. We also agree to the importance of regional coordination between relevant regional organizations and programmes, and in this regard we support continued cooperation with other North Atlantic RFMOs and welcome the initiative for a meeting with the OSPAR Commission this week.

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NEAFC among other fisheries management organizations in the North Atlantic has a major role to play in curbing IUU fishing of aquatic biological resources. Strengthening NEAFC to make it more effective in preventing, deterring and eliminating IUU fishing is vitally important. We are confident that the outcome of PECCOE's working will contribute to improving further the NEAFC control and enforcement measures, particularly, through developing an international port state control scheme.

At his meeting NEAFC is to review scientific advice from ICES and make its recommendations for 2006 on the management measures for the key stocks in its Convention area: the Irminger Sea redfish, herring, mackerel, blue whiting, Rockall haddock and deep-sea species.

If we are to be viewed as responsible fisheries managers by the outside world we need to find ways to resolve existing disagreements between us on management measures for commercial stocks in the Convention area, and, in particular, the Atlanto-Scandian herring and blue whiting stocks as well as the redfish stock and mackerel.

We are disappointed that the herring agreement, that was reached as a result of extensive negotiations and mutual concessions in order to restore and conserve this stock, does not work now. The current situation may eventually lead to unregulated fishery of herring and deplete this stock that has been restored through the efforts contributed by all coastal states.

We re-affirm our position that any new management regime for the redfish stock in the Irminger Sea and adjacent areas needs to rest on a solid and well-proven scientific basis.

It should also be stated with regret, that unregulated fishery for blue whiting, science-recommended TAC exceeded over many years and abruptly increased fishing effort by some players on the fishery for this stock cause serious concerns about its future conservation. We believe, that Russia is a coastal state in respect of the blue whiting stock. Earlier the Russian Federation provided convincing scientific evidence to prove the presence of blue whiting in the exclusive economic zone of the Russian Federation in the Barents Sea. ICES reviewed those materials, and nobody challenged their validity.

As you know, Russia is fully committed to ensuring responsible and sustainable fisheries. For people of the Russian Federation, the ocean and its resources play a very important role in ensuring food security. Therefore, the socio-economic impact of fisheries management decisions is always quite considerable. The delegation of the Russian Federation is as before willing to cooperate with all other NEAFC Contracting Parties with a view to achieving equitable and fair agreements on sharing the resources in the NEAFC Convention Area. In this light it is vitally important that all Contracting Parties of NEAFC contribute a constructive approach to making mutually acceptable and fair decisions.

Mr. President, our delegation is looking forward to a very productive meeting and to working closely with you and all the Parties during this week. We have to take many important decisions and I wish us all success in our endeavours.

Thank you.

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